

## Second London Irish Women's Conference

The second London Irish Women's Conference took place on Saturday 21st September 1985 in Caxton House, Blington. Over 300 Irish women attended, both 1st and 2nd generation, and of all ages and backgrounds. The Conference was opened by Dorothy Ferguson of the London Irish Women's Centre who talked about the achievements that Irish women in London have made in different areas. Other speakers were Dr Maíse O'Shea, who was arrested under the PTA and has been charged under conspiracy laws. She came to Britain 30 years ago and spoke of her life and work here. Margaret O'Neill, a 2nd generation Irish woman, was arrested under the PTA ~~and~~ in 1981, held for 7 days and released without charge. She spoke of the terrible effects this arrest had on her life.

The conference then broke up into workshops on the Irish born women's experiences of immigration and the experiences of 2nd generation women being brought up in Britain. The afternoon session consisted of 27 workshops on many different subjects eg the National Question and strip searches; the PTA; penitentiaries, Irish lesbians, homelessness, anti-Irish racism. The conference finished with a plenary session in which report backs were given from the PTO

Workshops and Resolutions from the Workshops were  
Voted on.





As usual, the National Question motion provoked debate and eventually, after a lot of confusion, the original motion that the conference recognize that the ~~Nation~~ struggles for national liberation and women's liberation are independent was carried.

Entertainment was provided at lunchtime by Charabanc, a women's theatre group from Belfast, and in the evening by Maria Tolly, a singer, and the "Hardy Marys" an Irish women's dancing group. Members of the audience sang Irish songs and there was a céilí afterwards. The social had a great atmosphere and I really enjoyed myself - ~~it's a pity there aren't more like it!~~  
Hopefully, we can have a lot more like it!

Obviously, at the conference, a lot of subjects were discussed to try to cover all the different things affecting our lives. However, if we do have a 3<sup>rd</sup> conference maybe we should organise it around a major theme. e.g. the war in the 6 countries and how that affects our lives here and how the struggle for national liberation in Ireland and Irish women's struggles for women's liberation are intricately bound up with each other.

Overall, the whole day and evening were very enjoyable and a lot of work was put into organising it all. The Irish women's  
PTO

Media Group videoed the conference and the social  
and hope to have the tapes edited soon ~~so~~ as a  
permanent record of the work Jewish Women in  
London have done and the achievements we have  
made. A Report of the conference will also be  
published soon.